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from his government or not. Even now we prefer to assume that the latter was the case. Should the former supposition, however, turn out to be the correct one, we should consider ourselves under the necessity of attributing greater importance to the occurrence, and to our great regret we should find ourselves constrained to see in it not an isolated fact, but a public menace offered to the existing rights of all neutrals."

As Chief Justice Waite has said in the *Arjona* case (120 U. S., 479, 487), decided by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1886:

"International obligations are of necessity reciprocal in their nature. The right, if it exists at all, is given by the law of nations, and what is law for one is, under the same circumstances, law for the other."

In the society of nations as at present organized, there is no central authority and there is nobody authorized to speak and to act for the society as a whole. The maintenance of international law depends upon the enlightened judgment and good faith of the different nations. Each acts for itself, but in so doing it acts for all, because the right of one is the right of all, and the duty to one, unless it be based upon a special treaty, is the duty of all.

If we are not our brother's keeper, we are, or at least we should be, conservators of the law. It is the right, and indeed it is the duty, of neutrals, not of any particular neutral, to protest against the violation of neutral rights.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

## FOR A CONFERENCE OF NEUTRAL NATIONS

An Open Letter to President Wilson,  
February 7, 1917

By HENRI LA FONTAINE

President of the International Peace Bureau

**A**S PRESIDENT of the International Peace Bureau, and in the name of the peacemakers of the world, "the forward-looking men and women everywhere, of every modern nation, of every enlightened community," to whom you alluded in your momentous address to the Senate, I deem it my duty and a most welcome privilege to express to you their high feelings of gratitude and elation.

For the first time in history the ruler of a powerful nation dares to proclaim the fundamental bases, the acceptance of which these men and women have for long years advocated as the necessary condition of a lasting peace. For those who on these shores a century ago started the Peace Movement which culminated in the calling of the Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907, as well as for those who have followed in their steps and have never despaired, your bold initiative would have been and is their highest reward. With unabated perseverance, they have appealed to churches, schools, universities, and parliaments; but they have not been able to reach the masses. Rulers and diplomats have not realized the need of the policies and the principles expounded by these forerunners, who have been branded too often as dreamers and prophets.

You have spoken; the world listens, and your words will reach the hearts and brains of all men. You have spoken, as you have said, not only for the people of the United States, but for the friends of humanity, for the worshipers of freedom, and for the silent mass of mankind confined in the trenches, as well as in the homes, of Europe and prohibited, even in the most liberal countries on earth, to speak, write, or yet whisper their contempt for war and their will to rebuild the world as a commonwealth of equal nations and of brotherlike men. The peoples, they claim, have the inalienable and imprescriptible right to dispose freely of themselves; and now you rise and proclaim in striking words "that every people should be left free to determine its policy, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid—the little along with the great and powerful." You have spoken of Poland as you might have spoken of Belgium, Serbia, Bohemia, Finland, Armenia, Persia, Hanover, Saxony, Egypt, Schleswig-Holstein, Alsace-Lorraine, Ireland, Lithuania, Trentino, Croatia, Transylvania, or of any dependent and oppressed nationality for the liberation of which the peacemakers have expressed their perennial sympathies.

"The equality of nations upon which peace must be founded must be an equality of rights," but among those rights it may be affirmed that the most vital is the right to be free nationally and internationally; like the peacemakers, you have claimed that "no peace can last, or ought to last, which does not recognize and accept the principle that governments derive all their just power from the consent of the governed." More than a century ago Immanuel Kant expressed this idea in his often-quoted sentence: "The civil constitution of each State shall be republican"; and he added, and the peacemakers have repeated it again and again, that "a State is not a property as may be the ground on which its people are settled; it is a society of human beings over whom no one but itself has the right to rule and to dispose." With you the peacemakers agree "that no right anywhere exists to hand peoples about from sovereignty to sovereignty, as if they were property"; there exists no right of conquest; wherever peoples are intermingled "inviolable security of life, of worship, of industrial and social development," is to be guaranteed them.

With you again the peacemakers affirm that "the free, constant, unthreatened intercourse of nations is an essential part of the process of peace and of development." They further urge not only the freedom of the seas, which already in times of peace was acknowledged and granted, but also the freedom of trade and, as Vattel says, "the right of way and passage," that which Kant called "the right of hospitality." They go even further and claim, under international guarantees, the right of settlement abroad. As for the use of waterways, they are of opinion that not alone an "outlet to the great highways of the seas should be assured" to every people, great or small; but that rivers, straits, and canals should be open freely to vessels of every nationality. The great highways on land should likewise be open to the citizens and the products of all nations without hindrance or discrimination.

Like you, the peacemakers have insisted there should be no more organized rivalries, no more unattainable balance of power; but only one world alliance, a community or concert of power; as you have said in such

impressive terms, "when all unite to act in the same sense and with the same purpose, all act in the common interest and are free to live their own lives under a common protection."

How such "a common protection" might be organized has been for many years the strenuous endeavor of universal peace congresses and of interparliamentary conferences. The peace conferences of 1899 and 1907, despite their shortcomings, brought the peoples nearer a world organization. The United States, through its delegates at these momentous gatherings, pointed out the true and final goal.

In this hour of supreme distress, when millions and millions of warriors of the most civilized nations of the world are on the eve again of leaping at the throats of one another in the most tremendous slaughter ever witnessed by mankind, when your own country perhaps is, alas! to be dragged into this whirlpool of blood and hatred, of suffering and anguish, would it not be a high duty to issue a pressing and desperate appeal to all neutral peoples, begging them to send delegates to a Congress assembled in order to draft, in simple and impressive outline, a World Declaration of Interdependence, as contained in your address to the Senate, supplemented by a World Charter establishing a Conference of States as a law-making body, a Supreme World Court as a law-applying body, and a World Administrative Office to further common purposes, to manage common interests, and to secure common protection for all States and all peoples? The Congress of the United States has already placed at your disposal the necessary resources for the calling of an International Conference to be entrusted with such a task. What the Fathers of this Republic, as the representatives of the American colonies, did for the United States and the peoples of this western hemisphere, the neutral States might be asked by you to do for the welfare and the salvation of the nations of the world.

Even if the United States are obliged to resort to the use of force and to have recourse to arms, it will be to uphold principles of right, justice, and freedom; it will be an act of protection, not an act of war; an act accomplished without hatred or malice, but rather with a feeling of sadness and regret, in the very spirit which, let us hope, will in the future animate the peoples anxious to maintain peace throughout the world.

However dark and serious the immediate future may be, you and your countrymen will not lose sight of the ideals which you have championed on their behalf. With you the peacemakers throughout the world will maintain these ideals; but they believe that it is not inopportune, in the midst of the clash of arms, to affirm them by deeds as well as by words, and thus to prepare their enthronement among men.

Wherever and whenever the representatives of the nations shall meet to rebuild a world where reason and good-will shall rule, where the principles and the policies of mankind as expounded by you shall prevail, you may be assured that the peacemakers, organized as a vast fraternity, with a clear and upright mind, will crowd behind you in support of your sacred endeavors to secure to the peoples of the earth a government of mankind, for mankind, and by mankind.

## "A PRESIDENT FOR HUMANITY"\*

By RABBI MAX HELLER, Temple Sinai, New Orleans, La.

FAMILIARITY, we are warned, breeds contempt; to stand too close to anything truly gigantic is not to see it properly and justly; no man can be a hero to his valet, nor has the prophet honor in his own country. The masters of painting, the classics of literature, belong to the past; a man must be dead, an event must have passed a hundred years, before we can begin to appraise them at their permanent worth.

It is not easy, therefore, to say of anything that has happened within the week that it takes rank with the great things of all time; one must be certain as to the marks of real greatness before he deliberately pronounces as epoch-making a deed or a word the echoes of which have not yet died upon the air, the fruits of which are as yet utterly beyond calculation.

Yet, standing in this pulpit, speaking from the traditions and for the aspirations of the most ancient of civilized faiths, I dare to say, after much thoughtful weighing, in calm deliberation, that the address of our President to the United States Senate, an address directed consciously, from a conspicuous elevation, to all mankind, takes rank with all the wisest, weightiest, loftiest utterances of a Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln; that it seems to me the sublimest of all human deliverances that have been voiced during the course of my conscious life. I say this conscientiously, as due from a religious teacher to the momentousness of a great forward step in human progress; I say this as due from the religion of peace, the nation of peace, to the greatest living champion of peace; I say this in reverence of high purpose, yet with every sober reservation of judgment, inasmuch as there are put forth in this noble address important assertions, explicit statements, with which I must take issue.

My inward compulsion to take this act of statesmanship into pulpit consideration arises from the fact that it deals with the very things that are most precious to the yearning hearts of our own prophets and our people, that it concerns itself, in high courage, in simple-hearted earnestness, with the bringing about of freedom, justice, and peace. Because Judaism was born in God-granted freedom, because its teachers placed righteousness above all earthly treasures, because its dreamers painted for mankind upon the canvas of their visions the entrancing ideal of peace, therefore a rabbi would be remiss in his allegiance to the essential principles of his mission were he to refrain from greeting this announcement with pæans of full-chested accord and hearty praise.

Let us rejoice, also, as Americans, in the bold leadership and the straightforward consistency of the act. For decades our statesmen, our orators, our historians, our poets, have vindicated for our country the glorious mission of leading the world in the evolution of genuine self-government, of affording opportunity for free unfoldment, of opening a haven to the oppressed, of being governed by justice and humanity, rather than by lust

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